

Message Text

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ACTION DLOS-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 ACDA-12 AGRE-00 AID-05

CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOE-00 EB-08 EPA-01 SOE-02 DOE-11 FMC-01 TRSE-00

H-01 INR-10 INT-05 IO-13 JUSE-00 L-03 NSAE-00

NSF-01 OES-07 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /126 W

-----104840 031605Z /45

O 031350Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9694

USUN NIACT IMMEDIATE 787

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 0998

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PLOS

SUBJECT: LOS-PRESIDENT AMERASINGHE

REF: COLOMBO 0969

1. PRESIDENT'S YOUNGER BROTHER HARRY JAYAWARDENE REPORTED TO ME AT DAWN MARCH 3 ON HIS CONVERSATION PREVIOUS DAY WITH PRESIDENT ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH HE HAD INITIATED AT MY REQUEST (REFTEL).

2. HIGHLIGHTS FOLLOW:

OUR FIRST EFFORT HAS DRAWN A BLANK. AMERASINGHE HAS BEEN SO EXTRAORDINARILY UNWISE AS TO HAVE BEEN VIRTUALLY INSULTING TO NEWLY-ELECTED MP'S SENT AS MEMBERS OF GSL DELEGATION TO NOVEMBER UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. IN AMERICAN TERMS, IT WOULD BE AS IF AN IMPORTANT SENATORIAL DELEGATION CAME TO SRI LANKA FOR A THREE-WEEK VISIT, THE AMBASSADOR DID NOT HAVE THE WIT TO INVITE THEM TO THE HOUSE EVEN ONCE-WHILE THEY HAD TO EAT NOTHING BUT HAMBURGERS BECAUSE OF VERY LIMITED PER DIEM.

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THEY ALSO THINK AMERASINGHE IS UNFIT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE SRI LANKA DELEGATION BECAUSE OF HIS STATEMENT THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF ISRAEL HAS BEEN ABORTED. DURING HIS POST-ELECTION VISIT TO COLOMBO, AMERASINGHE IS SAID TO HAVE BREEZED INTO THEN NEW PRIME MINISTER JAYEWARDENE'S OFFICE AS IF THE PRIMIN WERE STILL MERELY A POLITICIAN IN THE OPPOSITION.

3. THESE ARE FAR MORE SERIOUS OFFENSES IN THIS SMALL STATUS-CONSCIOUS SOCIETY THAN IN THE UNITED STATES WHERE WE AFFECT TO IGNORE SUCH CONSIDERATIONS. RULING PARTY STALWARTS OF DIVERSE POLITICAL VIEWS ARE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE PRESIDENT MAKING ANY CONCESSION WHATEVER WHICH WILL RESULT IN BENEFIT TO AMERASINGHE.

4. HARRY JAYEWARDENE SAID THAT DEFORMIN WICKREMASINGHE HAD BEEN PRESENT AT ABOVE DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT. HE THOUGHT I SHOULD GET MORE OFFICIAL ACCOUNT OF PRESIDENT'S VIEWS FROM WICKREMASINGHE.

5. AT MY REQUEST, I MET WITH WICKREMASINGHE AT 5:30 3 MARCH. IN THIS CONVERSATION I MADE CLEAR OUR UNDERSTANDING OF STRENGTH OF OPPOSITION WITHIN PRESIDENT'S UNITED NATIONAL PARTY TO RETAINING AMERASINGHE AT UN IN ANY CAPACITY, NO MATTER HOW TENUOUS CONNECTION WITH GSL. MY QUESTION TO WICKREMASINGHE WAS WHETHER PRESIDENT WAS FULLY AWARE OF INTERNATIONAL DISADVANTAGES TO SRI LANKA OF RESPONDING TO THESE DEEPLY FELT PRESSURES TO TERMINATE AMERASINGHE. THERE WOULD BE A MEASURE OF INTERNATIONAL OPPROBRIUM AGAINST SRI LANKA AS A RESULT OF SUCH MOVE. IT WAS NOT THE BEST WAY FOR AMBASSADOR FERNANDO TO START OFF. CONFIDENTIAL

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6. WICKREMASINGHE RESPONDED THAT POSITION OF UNP PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATIVES AGAINST AMERASINGHE WAS SO COMPLETE AND UNIFIED AS TO ALLOW PRESIDENT NO FLEXIBILITY WHATSOEVER. UNP MP'S CONSIDERED THAT AMERASINGHE HAD SYCOPHANTLY DISPLAYED SUPERFLUOUS LOYALTY TO MRS. BANDARANAIKE AND HAD TO GO. WICKREMASINGHE SAID THAT PRESIDENT HAD ALREADY AROUSED CONSIDERABLE IRE BY ALLOWING AMERASINGHE TO CONTINUE "FOR MONTHS" TO ALLOW SMOOTH LOS TRANSITION. MP'S HAD WANTED AMERASINGHE OUT LAST AUTUMN.

7. WICKREMASINGHE CONCLUDED BY SAYING, "I HOPE YOU WILL NOT RAISE THIS WITH THE PRESIDENT. HE DOES NOT WISH TO TALK ABOUT IT." IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HE WAS DELIVERING A MESSAGE OR GIVING AN OPINION, WICKREMASINGHE SAID, "MORE THAN HIS OPINION."

8. COMMENT: WICKREMASINGHE DISPLACED CONSIDERABLE KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE LOS-AMERASINGHE

PROBLEM THROUGHOUT OUR DISCUSSION,BOTH ITS
MELANCHOLY DOMESTIC POLITICAL ASPECT,AND WHAT IT
MEANS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AT THE LOS
CONFERENCE. HIS COURTEOUS BUT DEFINITE STATEMENTS
TO ME LEFT ME CONVINCED THAT HE WAS SPEAKING
AUTHORITATIVELY ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT. I
AM CONFIDENT THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD RECEIVE ME
BUT THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN ALREADY MADE PLAIN.

9. I HAD CONSIDERED REQUESTED REACTIVATING
EARLIER WASHINGTON CONSIDERATION OF A LETTER FROM
PRESIDENT CARTER TO PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE. HOWEVER,
I NOW BELIEVE SUCH AN EFFORT WOULD NOT BY ITSELF
ALTER PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE'S APPARENTLY VERY
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FIRMLY FIXED DECEISION AGAINST AMERASINGHE, AND
THEREFORE ADVISE AGAINST IT.

10. AS YOU KNOW FROM MY REPORTING ON THIS ISSUE OVER
MANY MONTHS, I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ENLIST EVEN
A SINGLE ALLY ANY PLACE IN THIS GOVERNMENT FOR
OUR EFFORT TO RETAIN AMERASINGHE AT LOS.MY
DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES EARLIER REPORTED SIMILAR
LACK OF SUCCESS.FOREIGN MINISTRY PORFESSIONALS
REMAIN HELPFUL.

11. I AM CONTEMPLATING FURTHER STEPS BUT MUST
OWN TO HAVING LITTLE OPTIMISM THAT I SHALL SUCCEED
IN TURNING PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE 180 DEGREES
AROUND AGAINST HIS UNIFIED CABINET MINISTERS AND
PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT IN ABSENCE MESSAGE FROM
FERNANDO ALONG LINES REQUESTED REFREL,PARA 6.
WHAT ARE CHANCES OF OBTAINING SOMETHING FROM HIM?
COULD WALDHEIM BE INDUCED TO OVERCOME HIS
SENSE OF WOUNDED PRIDE AND COMMUNICATE "AS
INFORMATION" THE AUSTRIAN PRECEDENT THROUGH
FERNANDO?
WRIGGINS

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